

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T MANAMA 0474

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

EO 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: XF, JO, BA
SUBJECT: REPORTED JORDANIAN VIEW THAT PEACE PROCESS IN CRITICAL
STAGE

1. YOUSUF SHIRAWI, BAHRAIN'S MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT AND
INDUSTRY, IN COMPANY OF HEIR APPARENT SHAIKH HAMAD, VISITED
KING HUSSEIN IN LONDON DURING PAST TEN DAYS AND STAYED WITH
CROWN PRINCE HASSAN IN AMMAN BEFORE RETURNING TO BAHRAIN
FEB 21. SHIRAWI ASKED ME FEB 23 (DURING LUNCH FOR DAVID
ROCKEFELLER) WHY JORDANIANS FEEL NEXT FEW WEEKS ARE CRITICAL
FOR PEACE PROCESS. SHIRAWI EMPHASIZED THAT JORDANIAN CONCERN
WAS VERY INTENSE -- THOUGH NOT VERY SPECIFIC -- THAT COMING FEW
WEEKS ARE MORE THAN JUST "IMPORTANT" OR "CRUCIAL". I
REPLIED THAT I DID NOT HAVE ANY INSIDE INFORMATION BUT THAT,
PERSONALLY, I SUSPECTED JORDANIAN CONCERNS MIGHT BE FOCUSED
VERY INTENSELY ON OUR ON-GOING ATTEMPTS TO ACHIEVE A SET OF
GENERAL PRINCIPLES WHICH WOULD PERMIT JORDAN TO JOIN THE
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PROCESS.

2. SHIRAWI AGREED BUT SAID IT WAS HIS IMPRESSION THAT
JORDANIANS INCREASINGLY DOUBTFUL THAT SUCH CAN BE ACHIEVED.
HE OPINED THAT THEIR ANXIETY ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS OVER NEXT
FEW WEEKS MIGHT STEM FROM REALIZATION THAT JORDANIAN FENCE-
SITTING SOON MAY NOT BE POSSIBLE; CHOICES MAY HAVE TO BE

MADE. SHIRAWI CONTINUED THAT JORDANIANS FEEL PRESSED BY U.S. TO JOIN PEACE PROCESS AT A TIME WHEN JORDANIANS SIMPLY DO NOT BELIEVE SITUATION WOULD ALLOW THEM TO PLAY A ROLE. I ASKED SHIRAWI ABOUT LEVELS FROM WHICH HE HAD HEARD OF U.S. PRESSURE ON JORDAN TO JOIN PEACE TALKS. HE SAID HE HAD HEARD IT "FROM MINISTERS AND HIGHER". I SAID, AGAIN, THAT I WAS NOT PRIVY TO LATEST STATE OF PLAY BUT THAT IT CERTAINLY WAS MY IMPRESSION THAT USG UNDERSTOOD JORDAN'S POSITION AND KIND OF SITUATION WHICH MUST EXIST BEFORE JORDAN COULD JOIN THE PEACE TALKS. I OPINED THAT PRESSURES -- ON ALL PARTIES -- SEEM TO EXIST MORE IN THE PRESENT SITUATION ITSELF THAN AS RESULT OF ANY PARTY'S DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES.

3. SHIRAWI WENT ON AND SAID HE FELT THAT "DUMP THE WEST BANK" SENTIMENT STRONGER NOW IN AMMAN THAN IN THE PAST. HE SAID THAT MORE AND MORE OF HIS CONTACTS THERE, BEYOND THE "USUAL ANTI-PALESTINIAN GROUP", FEEL THAT THE WEST BANK IS A NO-WIN SITUATION FOR JORDAN. HE ADMITTED THAT THE KING, WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS "ESCAPING THE PRESSURES IN LONDON", STILL SEEMED ATTACHED TO IDEA OF JORDANIAN ROLE IN WEST BANK. TURNING BRIEFLY TO SYRIA'S STANCE, SHIRAWI SAID GREATEST IMMEDIATE DANGER IN PRESENT SITUATION IS NOT JORDAN'S POSITION, OR EVEN SADAT'S, BUT THAT SYRIA MIGHT BE "LOST" TO MODERATE ARAB CAMP. IF EVENTS DO NOT MOVE SITUATION FAST ENOUGH TO PREVENT SYRIA FROM BECOMING GENUINELY REJECTIONIST, EVEN A PEACE BETWEEN ISRAEL-EGYPT-JORDAN WOULD NOT SAVE ARAB WORLD FROM TERRIBLE
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UPHEAVALS.

4. COMMENT. AS DEPT AWARE, SHIRAWI'S IS ONE OF BEST MINDS IN GOB AND HE IS ONE OF FEW BAHRAINIS WITH REPUTATION AND INFLUENCE BEYOND BAHRAIN. WITHIN GOB, AND IN WIDER BAHRAINI SOCIETY, HE IS A DOMINANT OPINION LEADER IN AREAS AS DIVERSE AS, FOR EXAMPLES, CIVIL AVIATION, EDUCATION, AND FINANCE. HE FREQUENTLY TRAVELS WITH HEIR APPARENT BECAUSE, WE SUSPECT, AMIR VALUES SHIRAWI'S INFLUENCE ON YOUNG SHAIKH HAMAD. WHAT SHIRAWI HEARS ABROAD AND PASSES ON IS BOUND TO BE LISTENED TO HERE WITH RESPECT.
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